

ACADEMIC PROGRAMS



College of Agricultural,
Consumer and
Environmental Sciences

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS AT URBANA-CHAMPAIGN

From the Office of the Associate Dean

Vol. 8 No. 7

Good Teaching: The Top Ten Requirements

One. Good teaching is as much about passion as it is about reason. It's about not only motivating students to learn, but teaching them how to learn, and doing so in a manner that is relevant, meaningful, and memorable.

Two. Good teaching is about substance and treating students as consumers of knowledge. It's about doing your best to keep on top of your field, reading sources inside and outside of your areas of expertise, and being at the leading edge as often as possible. Good teaching is also about bridging the gap between theory and practice.

Three. Good teaching is about listening, questions, being responsive, and remembering that each student and class is different. It's about eliciting responses and developing the oral communication skills of the quiet students. It's about pushing students to excel, about being human, respecting others, and being professional.

Four. Good teaching is about not always having a fixed agenda and being rigid, but being flexible, fluid, experimenting, and having the confidence to react and adjust to changing circumstances.

Five. Good teaching is also about style. Should good teaching be entertaining? You bet! Does this mean that it lacks in substance? Not a chance! Good teachers work the room and every student in it.

Six. Good teaching is about humor. It's about being self-deprecating and not taking yourself too seriously. It's often about making innocuous jokes, mostly at your own expense, so that the ice breaks and students learn in a more relaxed atmosphere.

Seven. Good teaching is about caring, nurturing, and developing minds and talents. It's about devoting time, often invisible, to every student.

Eight. Good teaching is supported by strong and visionary leadership, and very tangible institutional support. Good teaching is continually reinforced by an overarching vision that transcends the entire organization and is reflected in what is said, but more importantly by what is done.

Nine. Good teaching is about mentoring between senior and junior faculty, teamwork, and being recognized and promoted by one's peers. Effective teaching should also be rewarded, and poor teaching needs to be remediated through training and development programs.

Ten. Good teaching is about having fun, experiencing pleasure and intrinsic rewards. It's about the former student who says your course changed her life. It's about another telling you that your course was the best one he's ever taken. Good teachers practice their craft because they truly enjoy it and because they want to. Good teachers couldn't imagine doing anything else.

Adapted from an article by R. LeBlanc in *The Teaching Professor*, June/July, 1998.

Academic All-Big Ten

Congratulations to ACES student-athletes who achieved Academic All-Big Ten:

Christine Sinak -Womens' Soccer, FSHN
Jennifer Smith-Womens' Soccer, ANSCI
Lisa Fish-Womens' Swimming, FSHN
Janna Sartini-Softball, AG COMM

Mark Your Calendars! ACES Career Fair

October 7, 2004

Illini Union-Rooms A, B, and C

10:00a.m.-3:30p.m.

Questions to Promote Thinking

Teaching by questioning is a skill requiring patience and practice. But used properly, questioning in the classroom can promote the development of thinking and reasoning skills in addition to specific job competencies. Utilizing questioning skills results in students having a better understanding of the content, longer retention and less reliance on rote learning.

Observation questions are useful when introducing a new idea, a piece of equipment, an object, an illustration, or so on. For instance: What do you notice about...? What are some of the details of ...? What are some characteristics of ...? These concrete questions provide a firm base for higher-level, more abstract thinking.

Recall questions help students use the information they have learned about all or specific aspects of an object, topic, or subject. For example: What do you remember about problems/situations like this? What did you learn about this last week? What experiences have you had with this before? Because there are no right or wrong answers to observation and recall questions, even students who do not normally participate are willing to share their ideas and experiences.

Similarities and differences questions build on the skills gained during observation and recall questioning. We cannot assume that all students are able to contrast and compare; they need guidance along with frequent and consistent practice in order to develop this skill. Typical questions are: How are ... and ... alike? How are they different? What do ...and ... have in common?

Conclusions questions are useful at different points during a class presentation as well as at the end of the class. Drawing and supporting conclusions requires students to synthesize ideas and make decisions. For example: Based on what we have said/done so far, what conclusions can you draw? What are the important characteristics to remember?

Grouping and categorizing questions ask students to analyze on the basis of likeness. For instance: How can these problems/ideas/procedures be placed into categories?

Ordering questions give students the opportunity to establish priorities. How would you rank these ideas in order of importance to you? In order of their

usefulness? In the order in which they need to be accomplished?

Cause and effect questions are useful in problem-solving and anticipating consequences. For example: What could be some of the causes for this problem? What might be some of the probable effects of using this procedure? What would the consequences be of doing this? Of not doing this?

Probing questions help to clarify, extend thinking, include other ideas and make certain that students understand their own thoughts. For instance: What are you thinking about when you say it will/won't work? What is there about ...that makes you say...? What are some other ways of/reasons for ...?

The more we have practiced, and the more our students have practiced, the more comfortable we are with using a wide variety of questions and strategies. Further, we have become aware that too often in the past, our questions had been primarily factual ones focusing on terminology and basic information. These questions are important, but used alone they tend to promote only memorization of unrelated facts.

As you prepare for class, write down the questions you want to ask that day. This will help you feel more comfortable and help you identify the kinds of questions, and student thinking, you want to use and promote.

Adapted from an article by Fedje and Irvine in *Voc Ed*, June, 1982.

ACES New Student Welcome

September 7, 2004
7:00 p.m.

Krannert Center for the Performing Arts

CORRECTION-The source of "Tips for Using Questions in Larger Classes" was inadvertently left off the article in the July-August 2004 issue. Credit should be given to D.J. Kliowsky in *The Teaching Professor*, January 1999.

12 Commandments for Powerpoint

- 1. Thou shalt not put War and Peace on a slide.** Too much text on a slide makes it difficult for a learner to both see and process information. The solutions are easy. Use more slides or outline only major ideas on each slide and then verbally add details.
- 2. Thou shalt not use fonts smaller than 28-point.** Why make the learner squint? Not only is that irritating, but it can cause eye fatigue, and viewers miss important information.
- 3. Thou shalt not use busy backgrounds or ineffective colors.** Don't make your lecturer need sunglasses. If a background has too much going on, it competes with the information. Poor color choices make slides difficult to read. Yellow is a very difficult color on the viewer's eyes. Use aesthetically pleasing color choices with good color contrast.
- 4. Thou shalt not complicate slides with too many figures and tables.** The whole purpose of showing a figure or table is lost when a learner must focus on trying to make sense of all the numeric information. Use a handout instead. If a large table needs to be part of a presentation, break it into chunks on several slides and focus on one aspect of it at a time.
- 5. Thou shalt use animation, audio, and pictures in moderation.** You don't want your audience to focus on the bombs bursting in air and flags waving. The goal is to transmit information, not lose your message in the glitz. Pictures and audio can help break up the monotony of written words, but use them to enhance your message, instead of letting them become the message.
- 6. Thou shalt acknowledge all references used.** Thou shall not tell a lie or steal someone else's thunder. The same rules of evidence apply with PowerPoint. When you use a quote, table, figure, or summarize someone else's work, cite the source.
- 7. Thou shalt surely back up thy presentations.** Save and save often is not just good advice, it should be the law. Remember, it is not "if" technology will fail, it is "when"; you must be prepared.
- 8. Thou shalt not read the slides word for word.** If all the learner needed to do was read the slide, you would be unemployed. Use the slides as guides for a presentation. Don't take the slides right out of the

book. Use the slides to zero in on important book topics, and to add more material.

- 9. Thou shalt not use slides alone.** One or more hours of nothing but talk and PowerPoint slides would bore anyone. Use interactive exercises to address other learning styles.
- 10. Thou shalt practice.** Don't go in cold and fumble. PowerPoint is only a tool – one you need to use with poise and confidence.
- 11. Thou shalt be mindful of learners' limitations.** You are only as powerful as your weakest link, which is usually your learner's technical ability. Many learners will end up printing your notes in black and white. Busy backgrounds, lots of color, or poor color choices may print but be illegible to the learner. Black and white is preferable for printing purposes. Also, lots of pictures and a large file size may hinder the reader when downloading off the internet.
- 12. Thou shalt allow the listener time to process the slides.** While fast talking makes great commercials, it does not make for effective instruction. Don't put up a slide and then skip over it – that's very confusing. Always allow time for questions, and encourage your learners to ask them. Be sure to determine if your learners understand the concepts you are presenting before moving on.

From *The Teaching Professor*, June/July 2004.

Learning Grants

ACES faculty have been awarded course development grants from the Office of the Vice-Chancellor for Public Engagement and Institutional Relations. The community-based learning grants program is part of a strategic initiative through Partnership Illinois to provide opportunities for undergraduates to learn first-hand about societal changes that face communities. Recipients include the following:

Gil Mendoza, NRES-GIS for Natural Resource Management

David Onstad, NRES; **Robin Orr**, FSHN and **Susan Farmer**, Community Health, ALS-The Chicago Food System: Diet, Hunger and Sustainable Agriculture

Effective Teaching

Following are the results of a survey that was conducted by the Ombudsman's Office at Ohio State in 1980 regarding faculty opinions about the 10 characteristics of effective teaching. The items are listed below in the order that the faculty collectively ranked them. They are probably just as true in 2004!

1. The instructor's presentations are well-organized and clear.
2. The instructor is extremely knowledgeable in the subject matter of the course.
3. The instructor clearly communicates the goals for each class session and learning activity to students.
4. The instructor sets high standards of academic achievement and does not allow inferior work to get by.
5. The instructor frequently asks questions to check for students' understanding of new ideas and materials.
6. The instructor structures the course so that students take an active role in class activities through discussions, role-playing, problem-solving, questioning, etc.
7. The instructor provides frequent opportunities for students to assess their progress in learning course content.
8. The instructor adjusts the pace of which new ideas are presented to meet the needs of various individuals or groups of students in the class.
9. The instructor keeps in touch with how students feel about his/her teaching and their progress in the course.
10. The instructor allows students (individually or as a group) to make decisions about their activities and the use of class time.

Group Learning Activities

Dr. Linda C. Martin, Assistant Dean for Academic Programs at Oklahoma State University, was the keynote speaker and workshop leader for the seventh annual ACES Fall Teaching Symposium. Martin, a USDA Excellence in Teaching Award recipient, presented strategies for promoting teamwork while maintaining individual accountability.

Dr. Martin presented theory and practice related to two types of group learning situations: informal groups and formal groups. Informal group learning activities can be utilized in nearly any classroom situation. Activities can be interspersed with lecture and discussion. Examples include Go-Round, Turn to Your Partner, One-Minute Paper, Case Studies, and Group Data Evaluation, among others. Martin emphasized that students work in temporary, ad hoc groups that last from a few minutes to one class period to achieve a specific, designated task.

Formal group learning activities include Team Projects, Role Play, Debate, and Mini Research Projects, among others. Students spend more than a class period in organizing, explaining, summarizing and integrating materials into existing conceptual structures. Martin also presented ways to evaluate group activities while also holding each student accountable for his or her individual effort and contributions to the group.

The annual symposium is sponsored by ACES Academic Programs and the Academy of Teaching Excellence. Mark your calendar for next year—Friday, August 19, 2005.

Courses, Schedules, Requirements
<http://courses.uiuc.edu>

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